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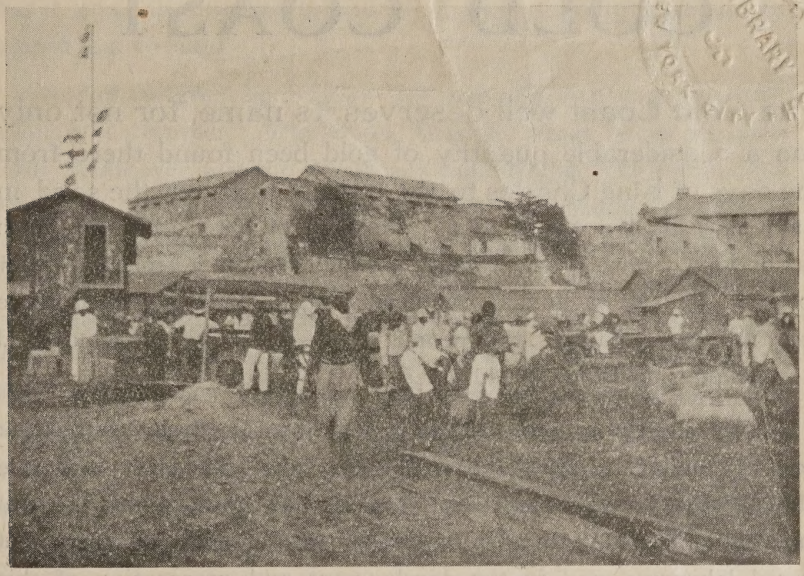

The Landing Beach, Accra.

BULLETIN, No. 8

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GOLD COAST

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THE GOLD COAST

The Gold Coast well deserves its name, for not only has a considerable quantity of gold been found there from the days of King Charles to the present time, but the sand in many places is of a reddish tinge; the fruit of the Cocoa tree, which has brought wealth to the Colony is, when ripe, of a beautiful yellow colour; the sky is golden overhead and, in harmony with these beautiful surroundings, the people wear the most gorgeous and picturesque shawls and headdresses.

Despite the advantages I have just mentioned, the Gold Coast was for hundreds of years one of the most miserable places upon the whole earth. It was the centre of the great slave traffic which supplied the West Indies and the United States with an endless multitude of forced labourers, and to the development and prosecution of this traffic the whole thought and energy of the leading men in the different tribes on the Gold Coast were given. To these callous, half-savages the sale of their fellow human beings was an immediate and great source of profit, and the Tribes made war upon one another, often with no other end in view than to supply the Slave Market. Victims captured on either side were sent down to the Coast, where they were bought by the traders of all nations, and exported under the most horrible conditions to Western lands. To the horrors of the Slave traffic was added the demoralisation produced by the importation of endless quantities of gin and rum.

These wretched conditions have long since passed away. The Colony is now under a wise and just Govenment. Slavery has been long abolished. The cheap, coarse spirits so ruinous to the native have been prohibited, and Christian effort has produced a new and better condition of life. One would have expected to find traces on all sides of the old demoralised conditions, but it is not so. Indeed, the change is so complete as to make it hard to realise that these dreadful things

belonged to a not very remote past. Now everywhere there are smiling towns and villages, and in many ways this Colony has become a model one, an example to others of how a country should be developed and civilised.

One of the great agencies in this marvellous change has been Missionary enterprise. The Basel Mission, whose work we have recently taken over, and the Wesleyans came to the Gold Coast in the early days of last century, and they have worked steadily and successfully ever since, introducing new ideas of life and better ways of living to the people. Of course, much remains to be done, for over the whole area, including Ashanti, four-fifths of the population are still heathen, but both the Wesleyans and ourselves have a considerable body of members and adherents. Our Christian community numbers over thirty thousand, and includes carefully-trained native ministers, very competent and thorough teachers, and a large body of educated people, for the German Missionaries were very thorough in their educational work, though they neglected somewhat the education of girls. The principal defect of their methods lay in the segregation of their Christian converts from their heathen friends. All converts were brought into the Christian Settlement, and were trained there out of contact as much as possible with the surrounding heathenism. Though this seems at first sight an admirable method, and has produced, as I have already said, a competent body of Christian workers, it has had the disadvantage that always comes from isolation. The Christians have not been able to affect their heathen relatives and friends by their example, with the result that the Church on the Gold Coast to-day is largely without Evangelistic zeal, and our Missionaries are trying to encourage the native leaders of the Church to recognise their duty to bring the Gospel of Christ to all who are still outside the Christian fold.

If the German Missionaries were doing such good work, one may ask—Why are they not permitted to return, now that the War is over, to their old task? The answer lies in the fact that their work was so largely educational and that the Colonial Government, after the experiences of the War, are not willing to entrust to aliens a large

portion of the Educational work of the Colony. We need not be surprised at this when we reflect upon the indignation that would be aroused in Scotland if a large part of the education of our country were entrusted to Frenchmen or Germans. Public opinion would not allow Edinburgh and Glasgow and the other great cities to have French or German Boards of Education. Similarly on the Gold Coast, with a considerable British population, strongly patriotic and with a multitude of Chiefs loyal to Britain, it is impossible, as things are at present, to propose seriously the return of the German Missionaries.

I had the privilege of travelling recently over the whole area covered by our Mission, addressing a series of Conferences and hearing the views of all the leading Christians, and I was surprised at the welcome I received. They could not do enough to show their gratitude to Scotland for the help we had given, and it was evident that the great majority of them had reconciled themselves to the loss of their old German friends, and had accepted cheerfully the link with Scotland that has come instead. Wherever I went there was a strong desire expressed that we should provide as soon as possible a sufficient number of Scottish Missionaries to carry on the work. This the Foreign Mission Committee are eager to do, and they appeal once more to the young men and women of the Church to provide the necessary recruits for this great field. The climate is, of course, a somewhat trying one, but the periods of service are short, and the health of our Missionaries so far has been good. I myself found the conditions not unlike those prevailing in India, and have come home none the worse of several months spent on the West Coast, between Calabar and the Gold Coast Colony.

For young men interested in Education and in the development of a great indigenous Church, I can conceive no more attractive Foreign Mission Field at the present time, and I would urge those looking forward to a Missionary career to try at least one short period on the Gold Coast before deciding upon another field.

FRANK ASHCROFT.